Human Events *A Weekly Analysis for the American Citizen*
Editorial Office 1323 M STREET, WASHINGTON 5, D. C. *Telephone* NATIONAL 2066
VOL. V, NO. 21, *Issue Number* 226, MAY 26, 1948 ★ *Editors:* FELIX MORLEY & FRANK C. HANIGHEN

JUN 1 1948

THE RACE OF THREE SYSTEMS

by William Henry Chamberlin

It is significant that each of the "Big Three" victors of the late war has become the standard-bearer of a distinctive idea. The United States stands for government by consent, a political rule of the majority tempered by many legal assurances of minority rights and combined with the principle of private ownership in economic life.

The Soviet Union is identified with Communism. Discarding husks of theory and considering only Soviet practice, Communism may be defined as the application of two principles, each pushed to its logical extremity. The political principle is concentration of all power in the hands of the tightly disciplined Communist Party. The economic principle is public ownership of all means of production.

Soviet Communism does not mean that everything is shared equally by everyone. Inequalities in wage and salary scales are at least as great in the Soviet Union as in the United States, and inequality was increased by the abolition of rationing last December. Distinctive to the Soviet economy is the ownership and operation by government organizations of all factories, mines, railways, banks, stores, etc.

This combination of political dictatorship and economic collectivism places tremendous, in fact unlimited, power in the hands of the men at the top of the Communist Party hierarchy. It is as if an American President, in office for life, could issue any decree with certainty that it would be unanimously approved by a rubber stamp Congress; could "liquidate" any citizen, including members of his Cabinet, without judicial obstacles like habeas corpus, while simultaneously having dictatorial power over the economic life of the country.

Great Britain is the first important country to commit itself wholeheartedly to a policy of democratic Socialism. The Labour Party, with a substantial majority in Parliament, repudiates both American private enterprise and Soviet political dictatorship. Its ideal is gradual nationalization of key industries and natural resources, to be accomplished by constitutional methods within the framework of traditional British political and civil liberties.

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Here, then, are the three principal systems now competing for men's allegiance. Each of the three Great Powers has its "fellow travellers". Outside of the United States one finds most scope for private enterprise in Canada, Switzerland, Belgium, South Africa, Hong Kong and Malaya -- an oddly assorted group of camp followers.

There is an unmistakable trend toward Soviet political and economic models in Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and all the countries behind the Iron Curtain. Australia, New Zealand and the Scandinavian countries had introduced varying degrees of mild Socialism before the Labour Party won power in Great Britain.

A considerable part of the world does not fit neatly into any of the three patterns. The Latin-American countries, for instance, have not installed Communist or Socialist regimes. But temperament and historical conditions have not made for economic individualism of the type accepted in the United States. This observation also holds good for large parts of Asia and Africa.

However, American democratic capitalism, British-Scandinavian democratic Socialism and Soviet totalitarian Communism are the leading competitors in a more or less conscious race to capture human minds and imaginations throughout the world. What are the strong and weak points of each? What are the prospects in this great international sweepstakes?

On the basis of productive achievement there is a very strong case for the American system. With six per cent of the world's area and seven per cent of its population, the United States possesses 60 per cent of the telephones, 80 per cent of the motor vehicles, 35 per cent of the railway mileage in existence. It accounts for more than half of the world's industrial production. Statistical investigations confirm the popular impression that the American standard of material living is the highest in the world.

America has been a magnet for European immigrants for generations. To be admitted to the United States is now the fondest hope of hundreds of thousands of wretched D. P.'s, living casualties of the war and the brutal peace settlement. These people are not discouraged by the late President Roosevelt's statement that one third of the American people are inadequately provided with the necessities of life.

From the standpoint of an ideal social order this percentage estimate, or even a higher one, for America's "underprivileged" may be justified. But in a world of relativity even the less favored in America are, by and large, better off than the overwhelming majority

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of people in most European, and virtually all Asiatic, countries. Unlike totalitarian lands, the United States has never tried to prevent citizens who thought they could better their condition elsewhere from leaving its shores. Few take advantage of this opportunity.

III

American economic power is almost automatically translated into political and military power. Never in its history has the American Republic wielded such far-flung influence outside its own frontiers.

Yet there are weaknesses in the American position that must impress any thoughtful observer. The burden of world power is not easy to carry. History is strewn with the wrecks of empires. It is not yet proved that the Republic possesses the maturity to play the role of leader of a free world successfully, even though that role has almost been forced on it by the emergence of aggressive Communism and the yawning power vacuums of postwar Europe and Asia.

There is an element of instability in America's highpowered economy, as the crisis of 1929-33 indicated. There has been a growing schism between traditional American individualist values and the creeping collectivism to which many American intellectuals have been converted. Much of the vitality and resilience of the American economy must be attributed to the twin principles of freedom of managerial enterprise and freedom of labor. But these freedoms, in an era of growing concentration of economic power, can lead to dangerous and disastrous deadlocks, for which no easy solution is in sight.

The Soviet leaders could celebrate November 7, 1947, the thirtieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, with genuine enthusiasm. Their State had survived some of the hardest tests that could be imagined: civil war, foreign intervention, two major famines, decimation of the old Communist Party leadership, the onslaught of Nazi Germany.

Communist control had been extended over wide areas of Europe and Asia outside Russia's frontiers. Communist fifth columns were burrowing like termites, undermining the foundations of foreign Societies, literally from China to Peru. Communism, like Fascism before it, enjoyed the psychological advantage of being a dynamic movement on the march, with all open dissent within its own headquarters rigorously suppressed.

Yet Russians, amid the pomp and pageantry of a November 7 or May 1 celebration, feel several causes for anxiety.

First, there is no recognized law of succession in a revolutionary dictatorship. This leaves the stage set for intrigue, palace revolution, perhaps even civil war, when Stalin quits the political stage.

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Second, the extreme isolationism which is a political necessity for the Soviet regime is a serious handicap to cultural and scientific progress. Historical parallels for the present Soviet Iron Curtain have been signs of weakness, not of strength.

Third, the psychological inability of the Soviet regime to live at peace with the outside world, its incessant war of nerves against its neighbors, so suggestive of the methods of Hitler and Mussolini, represent an element of danger. The war of nerves may easily become a shooting war beyond the capacity of the Kremlin to sustain successfully.

Fourth, although the Soviet regime lays tremendous stress upon material production, Soviet per capita output, thirty years after the Revolution, is far below that of the United States. One obvious reason is the enormous unproductive bureaucracy required under a system where the State runs everything, from steel mills to barber shops. As David Dallin points out in The Real Soviet Russia, the Soviet Union before the war boasted over two million statisticians and bookkeepers, and the number of office workers in any Soviet enterprise is fantastic.

IV

Democratic Socialism appeals to some minds as a happy middle ground between the extremes of economic individualism and totalitarian Communism. But some Britons fear that Labour Party Socialism may prove a case of falling between two stools.

Both American individualism and Soviet Communism have proved their capacity to get things done. America has preserved the incentive value of money -- money that can be turned into food and goods at the grocery and the department store. The Soviet method is a compound of differential wages and high-pressure nonstop propaganda -- with the shadow of the concentration camp hanging over the laggard and recalcitrant.

But Britain, in a strictly rationed, goods-starved economy, has little positive incentive to offer. And the humane, liberal British tradition is opposed to ironfisted methods of totalitarian compulsion. The answer to the dilemma thus far has been what Winston Churchill calls the American dole. What will happen in Britain and other "soft Socialist" countries when this dole is no longer available?

The race of three systems is on, just as ten years ago one sensed the competition between Fascism, Communism and liberal capitalism. One or more of the regimes may become war casualties, as Nazism and Italian Fascism have been. There are possibilities of evolutionary modification in democratic capitalism and moderate Socialism; not so much in Communism.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. V, NO. 21

By Frank C. Hanighen May 26, 1948

The ghost at the feast of Israel's nativity is, of course, Soviet Russia, although one would scarcely guess it from reading the public prints. "Across the river", as they say in Washington, the Pentagon generals are giving this subject a good deal of prayerful, anxious thought. So far Russia has not moved to intervene in the Palestine situation. But that does not mean that Russia will not do so. Often, nowadays, one hears the remark that Palestine may turn out to be another Spain. In this connection, it is well to remember that Russia did not move immediately on the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July, 1936. General Krivitsky, renegade Soviet intelligence officer, in his book In Stalin's Secret Service, tells how Stalin hesitated at first, weighed the pros and cons of intervention in Spain, and only after a month of this cogitation decided to back the Loyalists. Today, Moscow may be similarly canvassing the situation.

Meanwhile, the current Soviet line is to drive a wedge between Britain and the United States, to force the policies of the two countries into conflict. Whether they realize it or not, most American politicos are following this line when they demand that Washington put pressure on Britain to change its policy in the Near East. In this respect, Mr. Truman is definitely on the Communist line, as much so as his bitter enemy Henry A. Wallace.

One interesting by-product of Truman's pro-Israel policy remains sedulously unreported, although it is the subject of much conversation in the Congressional corridors and cloakrooms. It has been decided to pass a draft law. But what Congressman would like to bear this responsibility if conscripts should be sent to fight in Palestine? Unhappy reflections like this have spurred the desire to pass a qualified draft bill; i. e., one which would leave to the President the onus of enforcing the draft if he thinks the situation warrants it.

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It has often been charged that the Army keeps the standards for enlistment so high that the voluntary enlistment campaign falls short of success. During the past week, this point was underlined in an amusing exchange between Congressman Clarence Brown (Ohio) and Chairman Andrews of the House Armed Services Committee. Mr. Brown asked some of the questions used in the Army General Classification Test of Mr. Andrews, and the latter flunked, as may be seen from the following official transcript (Rules Committee, May 20):

"MR. BROWN OF OHIO. What is the definition of the word 'ambient'?
"MR. ANDREWS. I do not know.
"MR. BROWN OF OHIO. What is the definition of the word 'torsion'?
"MR. ANDREWS. I do not know.
"MR. BROWN OF OHIO. What is the definition of the word 'recondite'?
"MR. ANDREWS. I can't say. . . .
"MR. BROWN OF OHIO. I am afraid that you and I are going to stay out of the Army."

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For the first time in a Senate debate over the admission of a territory to statehood the issue of Communism appeared. Senator Butler (Nebraska) on May 20 opposed a motion which would have opened for general debate the question of the admission of Hawaii as the 49th state of the Union. The Nebraskan said: "I frankly admit that according to all the standards in effect when the mainland territories were given statehood, Hawaii meets every test. But when our mainland territories

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became states, there were no such world-wide conditions as face us today and no threat of Communism." The Senator then gave some details of the local political situation in Hawaii, the power of the notorious Harry Bridges and his ILWU union; he also read into the record a revealing letter from a Nisei, formerly a Communist leader, now exposing the C. P. policy in Hawaii, the strength of the PAC, etc. Butler did not oppose Hawaiian statehood; he merely asked that the Senate Insular Affairs Committee institute a careful investigation of the political situation in the Islands.

It would be inaccurate to assume that the vote which followed pivoted only on the circumspection advocated by the Nebraska Senator, on the matter of Communism. One factor was the desire of GOP Senate leadership to avoid the possibility that Hawaii might upset the narrow margin of Republican control in the Upper Chamber. Also, the votes of some Southern Senators supporting Senator Butler were probably influenced by racial considerations. On the other hand, there were a number of votes in favor of Hawaiian statehood from states where the CIO wields power. And, naturally, West Coast Senators favored Hawaii. In the end, the motion to consider Hawaiian statehood on the floor was defeated by 51 to 20. The issue, consequently, is pigeonholed for this session of Congress.

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Paul Hoffman, Prometheus from Indiana, has so far mocked the gods of the bureaucracy. But there are gloomy prophets who say that ahead of him lie the rock, the thongs and the vulture. He has disproved these prophets so far as his ECA team in the Capital is concerned. His top-level appointments are good, although screening of lower-level staff has been careless. But it is in Europe, it is believed, that his efforts may founder. For that area, Mr. Averell Harriman -- "he never had to meet a payroll" -- is creating a staff which lacks the hard-boiled quality necessary for dealing with European politicos. These pro-consuls, it is feared, are not of the stuff to say no, cruelly and firmly, when they get to Europe.

What they confront is revealed, in part, by a dispatch from Rome (May 23) to the Baltimore Sun. The Sun's correspondent, Paul Ward (Pulitzer prize-winner this year) reports that responsible authorities there, American and Italian, are "in agreement that unless Washington acts quickly and decisively the plan that was supposed to put Western Europe back on its feet and off the American dole will degenerate in the case of Italy into just another relief program without lasting benefit. Some of them assert that it is already too late to keep the first year's installment of the Marshall plan from ending up as a mere dole. . . . They add that the so-called 'recovery program' which the Italian Government submitted last summer to the committee for European economic co-operation at Paris was little more than a set of figures hastily drafted without reference to the realities. The Americans among them assert flatly that it was 'phony' and so were the figures which the State Department submitted to Congress. . . ."

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The race for the GOP nomination has now entered its "box score" phase. Sufficient primaries and state conventions have been held to provide a suggestive picture of the apparent strengths of leading candidates; and the uninstructed delegations, as well as those vowed to initial courtesy votes, offer an endless source of speculation as to who really commands their final allegiance. Experts can compile some very impressive scores for this or that candidate. This column offers a report from a reliable correspondent in New England, which may be of assistance to the box score makers. He gives a peek into the behind-the-scenes actions in the state delegations of Vermont and Connecticut, and offers some estimate of voting

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strength. His conclusions may be swept away by the rapidly shifting tides of pre-convention feeling. But the picture he presents illustrates a significant tendency as of today. He says:

"Stassen's chances have suffered irreparable damage in western New England in the past ten days. The Oregon reverse really nails the lid on his coffin. Stassen had undoubtedly counted on support from the Vermont and Connecticut delegations. Stassenites were rooting for a Vermont delegation controlled by Governor Ernest Gibson; and a Connecticut delegation controlled by Senator Baldwin. Both Gibson and Baldwin were totally defeated in the two recent conventions by the old guard. This is the true picture, no matter how much surface sweetening was provided for public consumption. In Vermont not a single Gibson delegate -- not even Gibson himself -- was chosen to go to Philadelphia. The Vermont delegation today is about equally divided between Dewey and Taft.

"Baldwin's reverse is equally dramatic, and even more carefully concealed from the public gaze. Kenneth Bradley, Baldwin's law partner, has been ousted as National Committeeman. The Hartford tycoons steam-rollered Baldwin, although he was elected delegate and assured a complimentary nomination vote on early ballots. Actually, he does not control a single vote except his own. I suspect that there are a half dozen concealed Taft men on the delegation -- an unexpected windfall for the Ohioan. The rest may or may not go to Dewey. But the fact is that at present Taft has made quite a surprising comeback in the western part of New England.

"Another fact about another part of New England is revealing. In Maine, William S. Linnell, for many years a member of the Party's National Committee, ran for delegate as a Stassen supporter. He was defeated by Miss Marian Martin, a Taft supporter."

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After watching the recent performances of the State Department, Capital wits have coined a new nickname -- "Secretary Snerd". For some years, the totalitarian liberals have hugely enjoyed Senator Claghorn. That character makes hay for their perennial campaign against the legislative arm of the Government. But, while Congressional brain-numbness is funny, comedians are by no means confined to the Legislature. Few commentators say so, because cabinet officers, especially the Secretary of State, enjoy some sort of immunity denied to Members of Congress. Therefore, it is about time to break the tradition and to say that Secretary Marshall is now being compared to that celebrated radio character, Mortimer Snerd.

In justice to the present Secretary, he deserves ridicule less than some of his predecessors. There was Stettinius, for instance, whose almost daily gaffs made Washington ring with hilarity. Mr. Byrnes, it is recalled, had difficulty in distinguishing between the Balkans and the Baltics at a press conference. Nor was Cordell Hull a paragon of intelligence and good taste. We once had the privilege of reading a transcript of one of Hull's press conferences. After discounting for the normal cruelty of a transcript, it must be said that the discourse of the "good gray Secretary" was scarcely intelligible.

As a matter of fact, there is no good reason why irreverence should spare the Chief Executive himself. A prominent Missouri lawyer, a good although critical friend of Mr. Truman, recently related the following story. He said to the President: "Harry, why don't you grant full recognition to Spain?" The President replied, "Why, we can't do that. Spain's a totalitarian State." The lawyer protested: "But Soviet Russia is also a totalitarian State. Why then do you continue to recognize Russia?" Bewildered by the impact of this new thought, the President could only reply, "Unh?"

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Book Events

The Stilwell Papers, by Joseph W. Stilwell. Arranged and edited by Theodore H. White. New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., $4.00. Reviewed by John Chamberlain.

To "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, Commander of the American forces in the China-Burma-India theater from 1942 until his removal in 1944, Chiang Kai-shek was "the Peanut". Lord Louis Mountbatten was "the Glamour Boy", and our British Allies were -- invariably -- "the Limeys". Franklin D. Roosevelt was alternately "Big Boy" and "the Booby", while Stalin was "Bloody Joe". When Stilwell encountered them together, Madame Chiang and her sister, Madame Kung, were "the dames"; taken separately, they were "May" and "Ella".

The breezy informality of Stilwell's approach makes this selection from his diaries, papers and letters one of the more enjoyable reading experiences of the year; whatever else may be said of the General, he was at least a born writer. Stilwell's complete lack of verbal inhibition, however, carried over into his conception of his job in China, and the consequences were deplorable. Here, as seldom before, the vocabulary made the man: the effect of Stilwell's biting phrases could not be forgotten, either by himself or others. When he was driven out of Burma in 1942, his speech about being "humiliated as hell" created an expectation that inevitably determined strategy; the psychological necessity of erasing the public admission of humiliation made it forever impossible for him to see that his position in Chungking was political and diplomatic even more than it was military. With his eye on infantry requirements, Stilwell forgot that Chiang Kai-shek must of necessity think not only as a politician but as a man who happened to have been born in Asia. Chiang Kai-shek's problems were not those of an American top sergeant with some troops to whip into shape.

True, the Kuomintang was stupid, corrupt, disorganized and totalitarian, even as Stilwell says it was. The Chinese Army couldn't fight, for it was riddled by starvation and disease, and its commanders were satraps who were more interested in the perquisites of local autonomy than in licking the Japanese. No doubt the Chinese Communists put on a better show of efficiency; no doubt they could simulate the appearance of honesty and justice. But if Chiang had acceded to Stilwell, if he had permitted the Americans to merge the Chinese Communists with the Kuomintang armed forces, he would not be boss in China today.

Chiang was wily; he knew that American air power, exercized from the Pacific islands, would eventually knock Japan to pieces. From his own politician's point of view, it made far more sense to play a waiting game, with an eye to conserving strength for knocking out the Chinese Communists after the war. If Stilwell's ideas had prevailed, the Chinese would have fought a better war in Burma and all along the lines from Indo-China to the far north. But in this case Chiang wouldn't have lasted two months after a decision had been reached in Moscow to let the Chinese Communist high command make its bid for postwar power.

Stilwell was an inspiring field leader, an excellent military man. But, unlike General Wedemeyer, who succeeded him in China, he knew little history, little about the arts of diplomacy, little about foreign psychologies. His book makes him seem lovable, stimulating and a whole host of other fine things. But he reminds one of those breezy American business men who live for years in Rio or Quito without ever comprehending that Latins must be Latins, and that a siesta is not merely a local prejudice.

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